Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BY PARTIES IN THE REVIEW PROCESS

Submitted by the Marshall Islands

1. The Republic of the Marshall Islands is the current Chairman of the South Pacific Forum (SPF), and wishes to highlight some of the positions taken by the Forum. Different ideas and aspects that shape our views of disarmament in general and non-proliferation will be brought forward. The Forum will make further views available as deliberations become more focused.

1995 Review Conference

2. The 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons took a historical first step down the path towards the goal of nuclear disarmament. The indefinite extension of this Treaty was a fundamental decision, which would greatly assist in the furtherance of international security and global cooperation. The Conference gave participants high expectations and the hope that finally there would be comprehensive global cooperation in all related fields under the Treaty. Our hopes were not entirely satisfied.

Nuclear testing

3. At its last meeting in Majuro, Marshall Islands, SPF expressed satisfaction at the permanent cessation of French nuclear testing in the South Pacific. This marked the end of all nuclear testing in a region that had been subjected to both atmospheric and underground testing for five decades. China's announcement of a moratorium on nuclear testing meant that all five nuclear-weapon States are now observing testing moratoria, long urged by the Forum. In 1996, the General Assembly took action to adopt and open for signature a comprehensive test-ban treaty, an effort fully supported by the Forum. The resolution was co-sponsored by all the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Forum.

4. The leaders of the Pacific region also warmly welcomed the signature and ratification by Vanuatu of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, the signature of Tonga, and the signing of the Protocols to the Treaty by France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. As a result of these developments, all States within the Treaty area have now given their support to the Treaty, and all five nuclear-weapon States have undertaken to respect its provisions. The ratification by France of

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the Protocols is welcomed. The Forum also urged early ratification of the Protocols by the United Kingdom and United States.

5. It should be noted that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have now concluded the collection of samples from the nuclear-weapons-test site in French Polynesia. The expedition was conducted by 11 distinguished scientists, and we are encouraged that they appear to have been given fairly good access to the test sites. A preliminary report should be made available to concerned delegations.

Southern Hemisphere nuclear-free zone

6. The establishment of two nuclear-weapon-free zones - in South East Asia (Treaty of Bangkok) and Africa (Treaty of Pelindaba) - is encouraging. Leaders in the Pacific region have noted with satisfaction that these developments represented progress with respect to the decisions accompanying the indefinite extension in 1995 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This is perhaps one area in which the resumption of nuclear testing in the Pacific had a catalytic effect, inspiring the leaders of those regions to safeguard themselves against the calamity which has and was visited upon the Pacific.

Responsible efforts to address contamination

7. The Forum leaders at their last meeting reaffirmed the existence of a special responsibility towards those peoples of the former United Nations Trust Territory administered by the United States, the Marshall Islands, who had been adversely affected as a result of nuclear-weapons tests conducted during the period of the Trusteeship Agreement. This responsibility included safe resettlement of displaced human populations and the restoration to economic productivity of affected areas. This is a matter of extreme importance to the Marshall Islands. There is great concern that urgent progress needs to be made. Gratitude has been expressed that some steps have been taken by the former administrative power, and the Clinton Administration should be commended for their efforts. The Government of the Marshall Islands will remain actively engaged with the United States. At the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, the international community was seen to have an acknowledged role to play, and we would welcome further assistance and interest. Some interest has been shown by the various organs of the United Nations, but much more needs to be done.

8. Reference should be made to so-called peaceful use of nuclear energy, from the point of view that all who wish to pursue nuclear energy for power production should be free to do so. Provided that there is strict compliance with the safeguards that have been amply outlined by several delegations. These countries have that right. But the Marshall Islands wishes to stress precaution, and the need to protect the environment from dangerous pollution.

International Court of Justice opinion

9. The advisory opinion tendered by the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons should be recalled, which recognized that all members of the international community have an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear

disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. All States concerned are urged, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to engage seriously in meaningful negotiations with a view to early further significant reductions of nuclear stockpiles as a step towards the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

Concrete actions for the future

10. Our outlook for these coming negotiations is framed by these considerations. 1995 started with a very positive and expectant international negotiating climate. Progress was temporarily taken off the right track by some irresponsible actions, but the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, and the start-up of work in that field should give the right impetus for action under this negotiating committee. As noted above, the opinion of the International Court of Justice is a very significant one, and it is only through thorough consideration that the right path will be found and the political will to follow-up on the Court's advice. Constructive engagement with the nuclear powers towards the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons is therefore needed. All delegations should take note of the significant and encouraging statements coming from the recent Helsinki summit meeting. Of course this is a preliminary effort, but the international community must support all such efforts that will make progress towards a safer world.

11. Those countries who aspire to becoming nuclear-weapon States also must be discouraged actively from such pursuits. Non-proliferation will not be made any easier by their actions. However, their security needs must be assured, and we will look at how the review process can be strengthened for this purpose. The need to assess current verification procedures with a view to making these more stringent and effective must be looked into. This is also a distinct part of our review. We agree entirely with those delegations that have expressed support for the crucial work on IAEA Programme 93+2 and would like to see more of these initiatives.

12. Accelerated work on a cut-off treaty on fissile materials is required. The Marshall Islands has supported this in the past, and are heartened to see that so many influential countries have taken up the issue also. This would be a significant advancement if successful.

13. Negotiations, as a matter of some urgency, on a nuclear-weapons convention should commence. Such a convention would take us closer to the goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons under international verification and control. This could be assisted through the establishment of an intersessional working group. Because we need to remind the nuclear-weapon States that if progress is not made towards this goal of elimination, then we fear that the whole system of non-proliferation might be at risk. For the future work of this Committee we must look closely at this danger, as well as focus on other substantive issues such as safeguards, liability, cooperation between nuclear-free zones. We note the helpful views expressed by the United States delegation earlier.

14. The Marshall Islands reserves the right to come back with more details on these issues, as well as other related matters as the debate progresses.